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The
Songs
of Aengus

Robard Emmet Ua Cinneidig





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The Songs of Aengus

by

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"No masterful singer am I,
Nor chant to the lofty lyre;
My songs are but imperfect echoes that fly
From the depths of a nameless desire.
No classic declaiming is mine,
Or weaving of complex themes;
My songs are but scraps of the glories that shine
Thro' the dark of my daily dreams.

"A rustic descanter am I
With the harp of the rustic bard;
And my theme is my life as the days go by,--
The blending of joys that can never die
And the sorrows I cannot discard.

"But valueless trifles, these medleys, meseems,
To vanish as flatt'ries are sung;
Yet my harp is so tempting a wizard of dreams
And lures with so bland a tongue,
I fain must sing out when his blandishments play
And follow his trifling whatever the way.

"And gayest are we when the night comes down
And thither we stroll in the thorn tree wood,
Making a song of our latest mood,
Singing for naught but the song's own good,-
Out of the hearing of yonder town,
Oblivious of list'ners, applause, renown."



The Songs Of My Harp.

My harp has a song of the sunshine,
And it echoes the song of the rain;
But my harp-strings un-tune when the song of regret
Awakens and murmurs amain.

The song of the sunshine's a dream of a cloud;
The rain song's a note of the thunder's low roll;
But the song of regret is a ghost in a shroud,--
A wandering ghost with a mournful soul.

My lips have learned most of the melodies strung
A-down the old strings that respond to my hand,
And I wake them in turn, when the morning is young
And prodigal sunlight is over the land;

And oft when the twilight falls under the moon,
And calling without goes the voice of the rain,
I chant to my harp-strings the spell-weaving croon
And trembling they wake with a plaintive refrain.

But lo! when the querulous song of regret
Comes sighing at morning, or sobbing at night,
My lips become mute and my senses forget,
And my harp twangs aloud with a cry of affright.

Cabeletta.

O! La Bella Dolorosa, what a gloominess you bring;
So a mesh of tears all gleeless now around me you would fling?
With a tinkling tarantella I will rout you then and sing.

On the willow hangs the tassel, and the wilding briar vine
Fashions gay festoons of trailing green on ev'ry bush to twine;--
And a mystic ling'ring gladness fills this rustic heart of mine.

How the ground is decked fantastic with catalpa blossoms strewn!
Ev'ry quiv'ring leaf is list'ning and all Nature is attune,--
And in yonder pool the noon-day sun out-stares the placid moon.

O! the wild bolero music my old heart keeps beating to,--
Like the hoyden winds of Autumn when the leaves they fast pursue;--
Like the tinkling tones of Notus when he runs the gamut thro'.

Look, the sparrow on the peach-bough, and the giddy pilgrim bee
Set the morning all a tingle with their merry minstrelsy,
Saying, 'joy dwells in Life's kingdom and there's joy for you and me.'

O! the day is filled with music and it whispers of repose;
And from out yon gloomy wilderness a wind of promise blows,
Then throw down your prickly thistles, gather violets and rose.

Whist! You flee, Dame Dolorosa! You out rant me with your sighs?
Never while my heart is lusty and there's beauty 'neath the skies:
Come! we'll revel in this splendor ere the blessed daylight dies.



To Make The Burthen Of A Song.

Buds of the elm tree, russet and green,
 Filling my path-way and door-way around,
Musing I read what thy prophesies mean
 Now as I gather thee up from the ground.
 Taking thy promise, I claim it mine own,-
 Sunshine will nestle where tempests have blown.

Such is my song
Musing along,
Morning and noon and the cheery day long.

Mists of the twilight, lilac and gray,
 Luring me on thro' a region of dreams,
Wond'ring I wait what thy messengers say
 Out where the moonlight mysterious beams.
 Tell me my mission for fain would I read,
 All is obscure where thy purple mists lead.

Such is my song
Dreaming along,
Twilight and dark and the dreary night long.

Reverie.

I sat in the gathering twilight
Just at set of sun,
Thinking of love, and youth and age,
And how the goal was won;
And I saw the world as mortals see,--
A vale of sin and misery.

Then I looked where the silv'ry moonlight
Flooded the world from east to west;
And there were meadows with singing brooks,
And all was peace and rest.
A fairy voice said unto me,
"This is the land of Ideality."

I said to my heart, "we are makers of dreams
And live in changeful time,
But whether we wander by shimmering streams
Or falter in friendless clime,
We'll follow the course of our dream-bidden will
While the light of the world is around us still."

The Un-named.

Cloud-banks black in the welkin piling,
 Tumbled and turned by an angry wind,
Sun-down shores devoid of smiling,
 Dismal the bourne where the day declined.
 Loud shout the winds with ominous tone
 Long-buried mem'ries of woes out-grown.

“Storm-tossed cloud like a galleon wrecked,
 Why seek to trouble a drifting soul?
Black-spangled heaven, medallion-decked,
 Call back the spectres that 'round me roll!
 See, I implore thee with tearful eye,--
 Sad is my spirit, I know not why.”

“Winds that blow so heedlessly bold,
 Tell what thou art in yon world above!
Art thou the singing of lovers old
 Madly consumed by the flame of love?
 Or, sighing of those love did not reach,--
 Or the plaintive commingling of each?”

“Tell me the shades that hang o'er my heart
 Dark as the gloom where yon tamarisk dies;
Name the one shadow that follows apart
 Ceaselessly staring with basilisk eyes!
 Something that clings as the smell of musk,--
 Poignant, bewild'ring, dumb as the dusk.”



Ballad of Winds and Trees.

He went but he said he'd return to me
In spring when the harebell hides the bee;
 When winds are awake in the soft, green grass,
And sing in the branches of ev'ry tree,--
'Twas then he would come back to me.

Long was my watch 'neath the sun-set tree
With the harebell blue and the crooning bee;
 And the friendly voice of the soft, green grass
Questioned each wandering echo for me
As eager I'd murmur, "'tis he!"

The west wind sang in the willow tree,
And the harebell swayed with the hidden bee.
 "Who comes?" asked the whispering soft, green grass,
And happy I answered, "'tis he, ah me!"
Then smiling I murmured, "'tis he!"

The south wind sighed in the sycamore tree,
And the harebell tolled with the droning bee,
 "Who comes so late?" said the soft, green grass;--
"Be happy," I answered, "'tis he, tis he,--
Be glad for he's coming to me!"

The east wind cried in the black thorn tree,
From the harebell darted the frightened bee.
 "Alas! who calls?" said the soft, green grass,--
Then I heard a voice that was weird to me
And hopeless I sighed, "'tis not he!"

The north wind wailed in the cypress tree
And the harebell listened silently.
 "Alas! how cold," sobbed the soft, green grass,--
Then trembling I saw that it was not he
But Death who was coming to me!



The Dance Of The Thousand Joys.

'Twas the midnight of my dreaming and the waning hours were fleet
As I glided down the mystic hall where joys departed meet,
And heard the drowsy dancing of a thousand ghostly feet.

I could hear a croon as sings the sea when wave on wavelet slips,
Then a droning like the piping Pan lets thro' his finger tips,--
A runic incantation falling silver from his lips.

Full a thousand joys I once had known all spectral I descried
As the moonlight flowed around them thro' the casement open wide.
Dame Gladness led the glitt'ring throng with Sorrow by her side.

Fain I gazed upon her blithesome form and watched her naked feet
Lightly tripping down the moon-lit floor while soft the music beat,
And youth be-thrilled my heart again, and oh! the thrill was sweet.

Then she beckoned me to join the dance and sing the midnight thro'
And rejuvenate the thousand joys my spring-time spirit knew,
There waiting voiceless in the hall, all deathless joys and true.

Half-bewildered then I felt her take my hand into her own;--
Then the dancing ceased and mournful grew the music's under-tone:
Then Sorrow looked at me and sighed, "wouldst leave me all alone?"

'Twas the morning of my waking and the sunshine hours were gay
As I gathered up the scattered threads that spun my dream of gray;
And up I rose to face my task and weave the threads all day.

Spirit Voices.

O what are the Voices that call to me
In the quiet night when the moon hangs low,--
In the purple night when the road outside
Is gray with the moon and the scattered stars,
And the wind steals out from the dripping wood
And sprinkles her wings for a tinkling dance,--
When the silvery veil of the welkin falls
From over the region of golden dreams,--
O what are the Voices that call to me
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps ?

O what is the Power that guides me on
In the peaceful night where time is unknown,--
In the blissful night where the road there-in
Is white with the smiling of deathless stars;
When the wind flows out from the mystic wood
With the music of God on her singing wings,--
When the shimmering veil of the Silence falls
And Truth is revealed to my yearful eyes,--
O what is the Power that guides me on
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps ?

And who is the Woman that takes my hand
On the perfect path of my nightly dreams,--
Who fondles my hand as we wind a-down
The luminous vistas that fill the night;--
When the moon creeps out like a naked nymph
To bathe in the glimmering flood of stars,--
When down thro' the heavens the four winds blow
With the wisdom of Eld on their wondrous wings,--
O who is the Woman that takes my hand
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps ?

O Love has a rune of mysterious tones
Like murmurs that wander thro' autumn glens
And wistfully croon when the south wind awakes
The slumbering thistles with ghost-gray heads.
And Truth has a resonant, rambling song
That swells and proclaims like a sounding bell.
And Duty hums on in a monotone
That lingers and lulls as the droning rain:--
And these are the Voices that call to me
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps.

The primeval essence that flows thro' space
And potently stirs in the souls of things,--
The force uncontrolled that illumines the sun
And brings back the green to the grass in spring,--
That holds the wild hawk in the dizzy sky
And guides the blind mole in the under-ground;--
The Spirit that speaks with inaudible voice
And lives in the conscience that dwells me,--
O this is the Power that guides me on
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps.

That passionless Woman of moon-white charm
Whose gaze is the glory that thrills the world,--
Whose smile, the enchantment that trembles at dawn
And throbs and revives in the joys of men;--
Whose voice is the music of exquisite things,--
(The runes of the mountains and woodlands and seas):--
That splendor bewild'ring that poets name
The Spirit of Beauty that symbols God,--
O this is the Woman that takes my hand
When my spirit soars, when my body sleeps.





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Nocturne.

I sat where a singer came into a throng
And cast o'er the list'ners a doom of delight;
And my heart kept a-pulse to the flight of the song,
Forgetting all else on that mem'orable night.

The rapturous moments enticed me away
From all thought of self and the list'ners around,
And to one who was absent my soul seemed to stray,
Afar with the music's low, langourous sound.

What happiness infinite, - fleeting alas !
Meseemed to have heard in the stillness her song
As she waited my coming at every pass:--
"O hasten, beloved, why tarry so long?"

"O bide not a moment but follow me here
Where the grasses awake to the zephyrs of e'en;
Where lipping the rillet purls under the brere,
And the spider hangs gems in the moonlight serene."

"O hasten, beloved, the musk of the fern
Has dripped where the lady-bug creeps in the damp;
The dew dribbled gentian droops over the hern
As he blinks in the light of the fire-fly's lamp."

"I passed where the willow hangs over the brook
That speeds through the grasses and under the ling;
I looked when the tassels in ecstasy shook.
But you came not, delinquent, e'en though I did sing,"

"I saw where the dews of the morning were strewn
'Neath the blackberry blossoms grown pale in the light;
I heard how the grasshopper mimicked the tune
That the little brown cricket sang out to the night."

"I passed where the mullen spread out in the shade
Its long leaves of velvet all silver and green,
And fringed with the netting the spiders had made
To catch the gold powders that fell from the bean."

"O hasten, beloved, the moon stealing by
Has peeped through the branches, the path is a-light;
The breezes that pass bring a lingering sigh
That is borne from afar in the stillness of night."

I sat where the singer had stood 'mid the throng
And I listened again for the doom of delight;
But the singer had passed as the voice of the song,
And I listened alone in the stillness of night.

In June Woods.

Come roll on the grasses that dance in the breeze from the cool of the woodland green;
Come lie in the shadows that dapple the grass and dream in the shade serene.

 This morn is the fairest of all the June,
 And the voices of earth sing an ancient croon
 That fills me with idyllic dreaming.

How blithe are the birds on the maple and elm and blossomy prodigal plum!
The air is a-pulse with a paeon that tells exuberant summer has come.

 The cloud-fields call to the butterflies white
 And upward they float in the glorious light
 Where noon in her zenith lies dreaming.

The leaves are a gleam on the boughs of the ash, and the willows with sun-sparkles burn;
The spider is weaving a fairy festoon, the lizard's asleep on the fern.

 A drowsy susurrus of bulrush goes
 Thro' every rune that the rillet throws,
 And whimples and winds in my dreaming.

The swish of the scythe in a hay-field a-far, the sound of the sickle's low gling,
Like music that wakes in the vallies of sleep, a passionless yearning they bring;

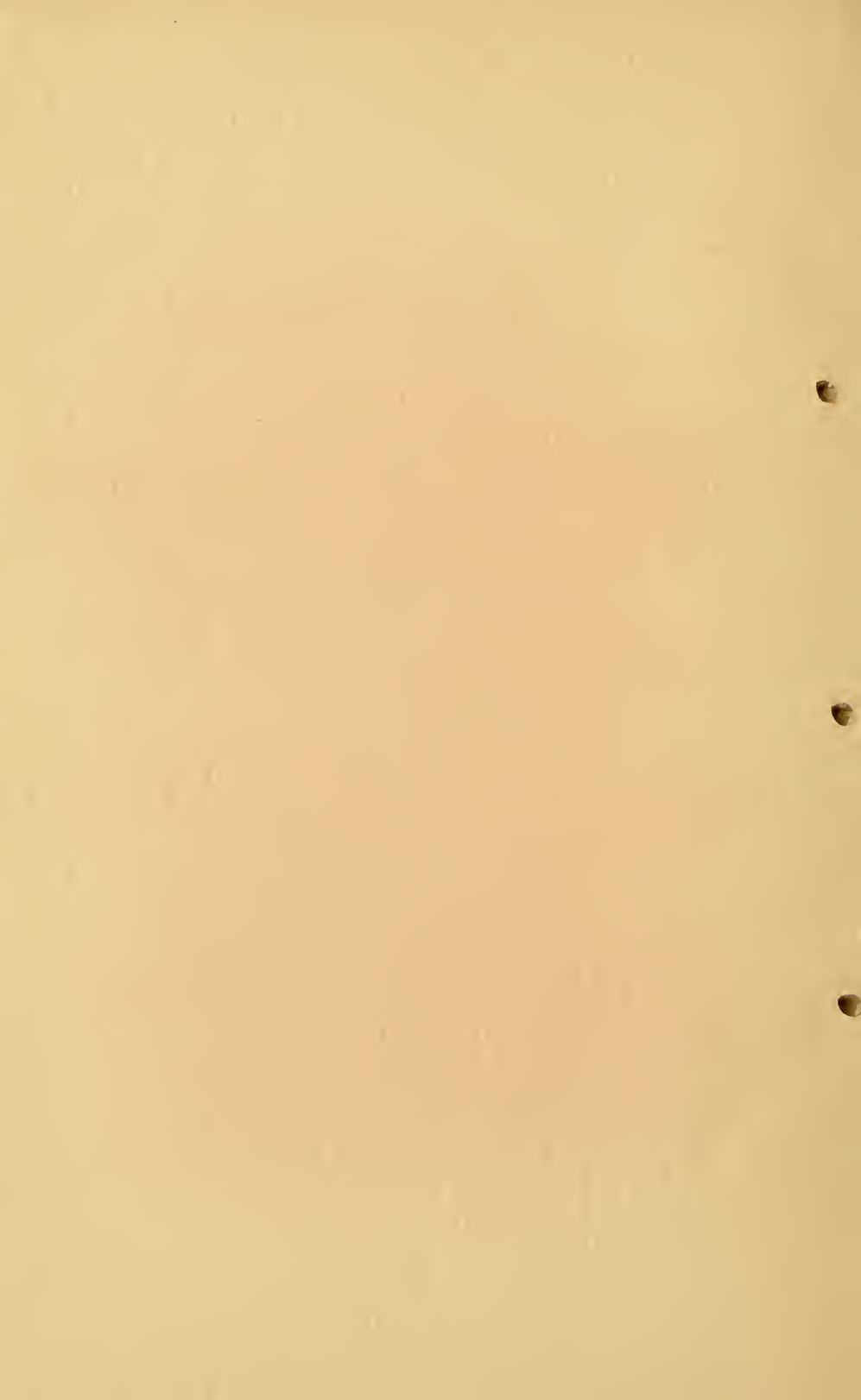
 A yearning that whispers, "refrain, - with-hold,--
 The riddle of being shall never be told
 But ever shall chase thro' your dreaming."

Cradle Song.

“Shoheen Ho” (*Seoitin seoid.*)

Far o'er the hill tops the night clouds are slumb'ring,
 Drooping the heather blooms under the moon;
Faintly the wind-harps, their canticles numb'ring
 Their mystical sweets with my singing Aroon.
See! the pale sparkles of even are flinging
 Down thro' the stillness a fairy-like glow,
While with the shadows sweet fancies are winging
 To gladden thy slumbers, then shoheen sho-ho.

Whist! in the meadow the laverock is waking
 Hid where the pippin hangs ripe on the bough;
Here o'er thy cradle the dream-sprites are shaking
 The music of dew-drops a-down on thy brow.
O! joyful my heart joins the bird's holy singing,
 And lets not the theme of day's turbulence flow.
Song is my pray'r while the cradle is swinging,
 So bless'd be thy peacefulness, shoheen sho-ho.



The Cry Of The Soul.

I am an atom of the void in ecstasy suspiring !

I am a ray of that first light that o'er the east of Eden fell;
I am a breath of that same wind that kissed the Earth when Time was young;
I am a note of that strange chord that woke the music of the spheres
And stirred among the first-born leaves and sent the echoes thro' the world;
I am a thrill of that wild joy that pulsates 'round the moving globe
With whisperings of ages gone and murmurs of the time to be !

I am an echo of the Voice, to ev'ry call responding !

I am a unit of the flesh, primordial vice inheriting !

I am Love' celestial touch that stirs the heart immaculate;
I am Passion's burning blush that brings the soul's abandonment;
I am Truth's unguided feet that walk the boundless Universe;
I am Faith and I am Doubt; I am Peace and Discontent;
I am Honor, I am Shame, - Wild Desire, - and I am Sin !

I am Virtue's thin white robe that trails its hem above the dust;
I am Hope's unbandaged eyes that see the daylight in the dark;
I am Pleasure's merry laugh that rises up when Folly calls;
I am Poverty's trustful child that prays anew each morrow's morn;
I am Joy's inspiring song that tells its burthen evermore;
I am Misery's weeping eyes that stare in mood disconsolate;
I am Suffering, dark Despair; wild-eyed Woe, and voiceless Grief;
I am Wisdom, I am Want; I am Care and Hunger cold;
I am dreadful Circumstance, - I am Heaven and I am Hell !



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